

Authenticity And the Power of Teamwork



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GEORGIA VOCATIONAL
REHABILITATION AGENCY

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The Power of Authenticity

By Executive Director Sean T. Casey



It's definitely a cliché, and you'll find it printed on inspirational posters, circulated on internet memes, and probably needlepointed on some pillows.

They don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

The thing about clichés is that most of them are rooted in some truth. Website after website will provide you with lists of how managers can make employees feel appreciated. Well-meaning authors and leadership coaches suggest bringing in donuts, springing \$75 bucks for a pizza party, and complementing staff on their work.

I'm not knocking those ideas. Everyone likes acknowledgement when they're doing solid work, and an edible treat in the workplace has been known to spark a near-stampede among weary office workers. But at the end of the day, the most important knowledge to keep at the forefront is that your employees are people — parents, friends, daughters and sons, members of churches and community organizations. They may report to you on an organizational chart, but they are also your peers. Putting yourself in their shoes when communicating can mean the difference between a positive employer-employee connection and becoming the topic of water-cooler complaints.

That said, here are three insights I've picked up along the way, and I hope you find them as helpful as I have.

1) Give specific compliments and ensure those compliments are genuine. If you have the kind of workforce I hope you do, you're surrounded by perceptive people. If you tell a team member, "Good work today," and you're well aware you haven't interacted with them in a month, your words lack sincerity, and the person on the receiving end knows it. Instead, a simple, "How are you?" may suffice to show you appreciate the individual enough to notice them. On the other hand, if a staffer has recently helped you with a specific assignment, a word of thanks means a lot and should include detail. Tell the account manager who recently landed a major deal that you noticed the way they built a new relationship and you appreciate their professionalism in their sales pitch. The detail in your words will tell them their work matters to you as well as to the company.

2) If complements are important, then constructive criticism is absolutely vital, too. If you're lucky in your career, you've had a mentor, and one thing good mentors have in common is that they're also coaches. I have two children, and without condescending to my coworkers, leading an organization is a little like parenting. If you truly care about the people you lead, you owe them constructive criticism when someone, or something, is headed off course.

When giving feedback, you can be kind without sugarcoating the truth. Then offer support to help redirect. Don't wait until annual performance evaluation time either. Coaching happens all year long, and it tells your staff you have their backs as developing professionals in addition to looking after the overall welfare of the organization.



3) Don't be afraid to acknowledge what you don't know. Your employees know you don't know everything, nor do they expect you to. Just because you're the CEO of an e-Commerce website doesn't necessarily mean you know how to code. Some of the smartest employees I have are the people who will say, "I don't have experience in that area, but I'd be glad to do some research

and get back with you. How soon do you need it?" An honest yet helpful response earns an immense amount of respect.

These steps together show that authenticity can help create a positive organization complete with respect and cooperation.

Search and Employ

A Project Search Success Story

By Instructor Jennifer Spitko

Matthew Redhead is a 20 year old with a significant intellectual disability and speech impairment who has made great strides in Effingham County's Project SEARCH program this year. Matthew's story is a testament to the effectiveness of the Project SEARCH program and an inspiring example of what young adults with significant disabilities can achieve.

Matthew will graduate from Project SEARCH and Effingham County High School in May 2018 and has recently been hired at Faith Equestrian Center. Through this job placement, Matthew has gained independence, earns his own money and is a successful contributing citizen. Matthew's success did not come easily. Matthew's desire to work and willingness to change, the endless support from his parents and the hard work and collaboration of the Project SEARCH team and businesses like Faith Equestrian who support hiring individuals with disabilities made it possible for Matthew to be competitively employed in a job that is a perfect match for him.

When Matthew started at Project SEARCH in August, he struggled with social skills, behavior, communication and adhering to the strict hygiene guidelines of Effingham Health System. There were questions about

whether Matthew was a good fit for the Project SEARCH program, and his parents considered re-enrolling Matthew in high school classes. The Project SEARCH team, which consists of Matthew, his parents, Effingham County Schools representatives, Effingham Health System representatives, an EmployAbility Community Employment Specialist and Vocational Rehabilitation caseworkers, met to discuss Matthew's options. The team decided that since the goal was for Matthew to get a job and gain more independence, Project SEARCH was the best placement for him. The team consulted with a Speech and Language Pathologist and Behavior Specialist and developed a Functional Behavior Assessment and Behavior Intervention Plan.

Matthew spent his first internship at Project SEARCH in the classroom with the instructor and skills trainer learning human resources and housekeeping job tasks. The focus however was on social skills and appropriate workplace behavior. Matthew made many improvements during this time not only in performing his job tasks, but also in the following work related behaviors: following directions, appropriate communication, admitting mistakes, demonstrating good hygiene, maintaining personal space boundaries and respecting the rights and



privacy of others. The team decided that Matthew was ready to start becoming more independent in his internships. ZT Howard and his staff agreed to collaborate with the Project SEARCH team, and Matthew completed his next rotation in the Physical Therapy Department. He started with the support of the instructor and skills trainer, but by the end of the ten week internship, Matthew was independently reporting to his work site and working half days with the Physical Therapy staff.

Matthew really flourished during his final internship in grounds maintenance. After only two days of support from the Project SEARCH instructor, Matthew was able to work full days with his mentor, Colen Campbell. During this internship, Matthew helped maintain the grounds by picking up trash and sticks, fertilizing the grass, watering plants, sweeping and emptying trash in the workshop and cleaning the golf carts. He enjoyed the work and being outdoors. Colen was a true mentor to Matthew, not only teaching him tasks that would lead to employment, but also taking the time to learn the signs that Matthew often used to communicate and teaching him strategies to use to overcome a fear he

has had since childhood.

When Mandy Cooke, Community Employment Specialist with EmployAbility, learned of the job opportunity at Faith Equestrian Center that involved tasks such as cleaning stalls and feeding and providing water to the animals, she immediately thought of Matthew. Matthew and his parents were very excited about the opportunity. Matthew went on a working interview and was offered the job. He enjoys his job, takes pride in his work and loves making his own money.

You can see a change in Matthew since he started working at Faith Equestrian. He presents himself with greater confidence and maturity. It is heartwarming to see a young man like Matthew overcome obstacles and become successful. None of this would have been possible without the support of the Project SEARCH team, especially Matthew's parents and his mentors at Effingham Health System who saw potential and never gave up on him. We are all very proud of Matthew's hard work and what he has accomplished.



Get to Know a Legislator

This Month We Feature Horacena Tate



Senator

Administration from Clark Atlanta University in 1992.

Sen. Tate is very active in community affairs. She has been the computer literacy advisor for the Butler Street YMCA, a volunteer software instructor for local churches, a delegate representing Clark Atlanta University at the International Community Education Conference in Trinidad and a speaker for several metro-Atlanta public schools' functions. In 2001, she served as Vice President of Rosalie Wright Community Council. Sen. Tate currently serves on the Atlanta-Fulton County Senate Delegation.

Horacena Tate, a Democrat, was first elected to the Georgia Senate from the 38th District in 1998, representing portions of Cobb and Fulton County. Sen. Tate is the Minority Caucus Chairwoman and currently serves as secretary for the Reapportionment and Redistricting committee. She also is a member of the Appropriations, Education and Youth, Rules, State and Local Governmental Operations and Urban Affairs committees.

Born in Griffin and raised in Atlanta, Sen. Tate attended school in the Atlanta Public School System and graduated from Frederick Douglass High School in 1973. She obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in Education from the University of Georgia in 1977. After graduating, Sen. Tate began her professional career as an employee in the Georgia Department of Labor in 1977, and was once a volunteer in the office of former Governor Jimmy Carter. She spent several years as an employee and trainer with United Airlines and Apollo Travel Services. To further her formal education, Dr. Tate enrolled at Atlanta University in 1987 and in 1988 received a Master's degree in Educational Administration. She later received her Ed.D. in Educational

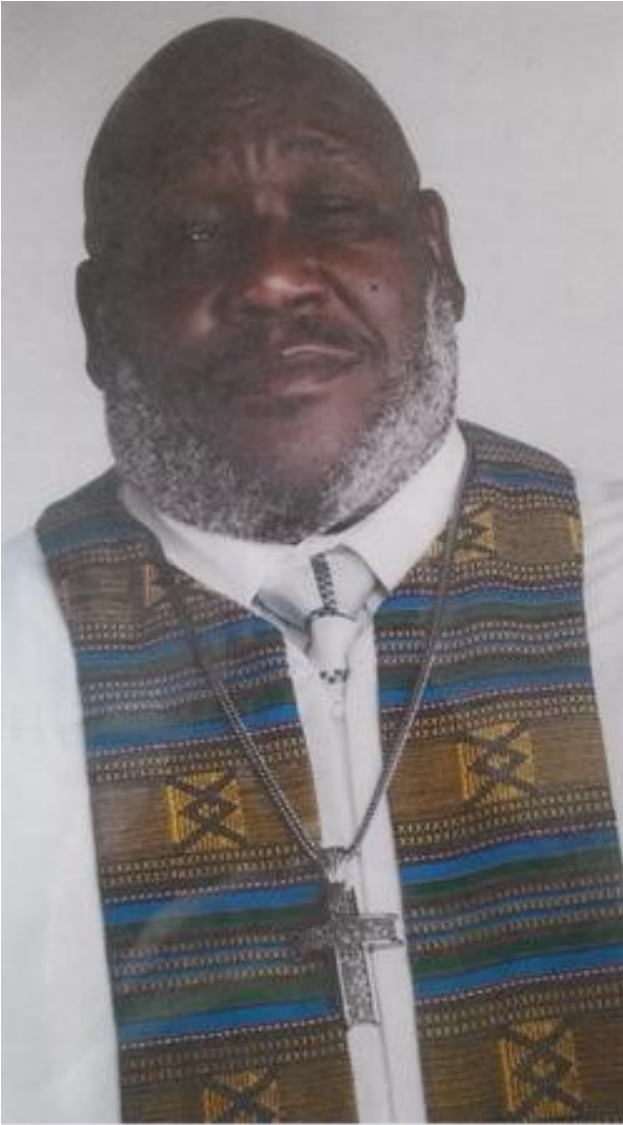
Sen. Tate has been an active member of the Cascade United Methodist Church for many years. She is also a member of the United Methodist Women's Group, the Alpha Kappa Alpha National Sorority where she previously held a leadership role as Corresponding Secretary for one of the sorority's local chapters. She received the Public Servant Award from the Coalition on Hunger in 2001, Distinguished Public Servant Award from the Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive Merchant Association in 2000, Legislator of the Year Award from the National Association of Social Workers, Georgia Chapter in 2000, Leader of Distinction Award from Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority in 1999, 2000 and 2003, the Outstanding Leadership Award from the Medical Staff of Southwest Hospital and Medical Center in 2000, the Outstanding Achievement Award from the National Women of Achievement in 1999, and the Unity Award from the Atlanta Job Corps in 2001. Sen.

Tate also served as speaker for Atlanta/Athens Upward Bound Awards Program in 2001 and the Finer Womanhood Observance Program in 1999.



Remembering Daniel Thomas

In Memoriam



Mr. Daniel Thomas, a retired member of the GVRA family, passed away May 22 at St. Francis Hospital in Columbus.

Daniel's employment included eight years of service at Roosevelt Warm Springs as a rehabilitation counselor. He was a well-liked counselor and co-worker, and students highly respected him as he served to enhance the lives of young people with disabilities.

Daniel was a big man with a big heart for people. One former co-worker described him as "a teddy bear at heart" who "went

beyond the call of duty to support the students and staff at RWS. He will truly be missed."

During his time with Vocational Services, he primarily served students referred from the Metro Atlanta area and developed cooperative and productive working relationships with field counselors in that area.

Daniel served eight years in the U.S. Army with two tours in Germany. He earned the rank of Staff Sergeant (E-6). Daniel attended and received his Bachelor and Master's Degree from Troy State University in Counseling and Human Development.

He also attended Shorter College and earned a diploma in Christian Ministry. He was later ordained in the Gospel Ministry. Daniel faithfully served in the ministry in various capacities including as pastor at churches in Georgia and Alabama.

Daniel was born in Columbus, son of the late Jake and Ludie Hardwick Thomas. His survivors include his wife, Margie Thomas; two sons, Brian and Marcus Mincey; five daughters, Kimberly Thomas, Barbara (Bobby) Thomas, Michelle (Timothy) Walton, Tracy Johnson and Stacey Mincey; one sister, Judie (William) Grimes; 19 grandchildren and 1 great-grandchild.

He was a member of Macedonia Baptist Church in Columbus. Burial will be at Ft. Mitchell National Cemetery in Ft. Mitchell, AL.



Working Together

How GIB's Intake Unit Helps VR

GVRA recently tapped Georgia Industries for the Blind (GIB) to begin taking referrals for blind and visually impaired clients across the state, helping expedite how quickly clients move through the system and lessening counselors' workload.

"This is a big deal in helping us help the counselors in the field," said GIB Call Center Supervisor Jared Sims. "We want to get the word out so that people know this service exists."

Here's how it works. When a potential client with a visual impairment reaches out to local office, they can decide whether they'd like to do their initial referral in person or over the phone. If they decide they'd prefer to begin the process over the phone, that's where GIB comes in.

The call center operators guide callers through an introduction to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and go over the VR handbook. They'll outline the various medical forms they'll need from the caller, and they'll get their demographic and

financial information. Once the medical forms have been returned to the GIB call center, and the caller has been officially approved for services, they're then directed to a counselor in their local area.

Potential clients are welcome to reach out the call center themselves to begin the referral process. They can call the GIB Intake Unit directly at 1-(888) 226-3444. Referring counselors can call that number or email referrals to GIB.Intake@gvs.ga.gov.

"The GVRA Intake Unit is many times the first impression of GVRA for blind and low vision applicants. As someone who is not only visually impaired, but also has been a VR client, I feel a great responsibility to make this first impression a positive one," said Call Center Operator Gordon Callaway. "This unit gives me the opportunity to give the applicant hope that they can live independently and obtain or maintain employment as well as freeing up more time for the counselors to give them more time to focus on our clients."



Summer Jobs ...

... And Year Round Opportunity

By LaGrange Office Team Lead Christopher Smith

To most, summertime symbolizes fun, vacations and time spent with family and friends. For the students of the Troup County School System participating in the GVRA E3 Program, it also symbolizes opportunity. Troup County is one of the pilot sites for E3 (Explore, Engage, Employ) which serves youth and students with disabilities by providing transitional services leading to career pathways to work.

Students identified by the Troup County Exceptional Education Department and GVRA E3 Counselor Dan Matthews were sponsored by GVRA to attend the Job Exploration Training program or JETS. The JETS program is a summer camp conducted by the Achievement Center of Easter Seals in Opelika, Alabama. The JETS summer camp consist of two weeks of intensive training which includes: job readiness training, vocationally oriented field trips and paid work based learning experiences. Each day during the program, the students arrived at 7:30 a.m. at the LaGrange VR

office where they would board a bus to travel forty plus miles one way to the Achievement Center to begin their training. After a long day of classroom instruction and work based learning, the students would then make the return trip to LaGrange. The goal is to provide these students with the necessary tools they will need to be successful in their future vocational endeavors while affording them the opportunity to learn more about the world of work and themselves.

Due to the hard work of the GVRA Lagrange VR Unit staff, Troup County School System and the Achievement Center, this year's JETS program had an unprecedented 100 percent participation rate by those referred. Pictured below from left to right, are GVRA staff members Dean Harvey and Dan Matthews, the participants of this summer's JETS program and Clay Dean, Coordinator of Transition Services for the Achievement Center.



New Idea Initiative

Broadening the Horizon One Idea at a Time

Dear Coworkers,

As I reflect on our positive organizational progress, I am reminded of the value of your ideas and contributions to process improvement within our organization. My local office visits during my first twelve to fifteen months with Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA) provided valuable insight and an opportunity to talk about what matters to you.

I want to keep those lines of communication open. Therefore, I am pleased to announce the GVRA Initiative for New Ideas that will allow you to share your suggestions through a convenient process.

I appreciate the opportunity to hear how you feel we can improve or enhance customer service, productivity, or staff morale. The Office of Strategy & Innovation (OSI) will launch this new initiative.

Numerous benefits of this Initiative include:

- A centralized repository for all ideas collected by one Office
- Strategic alignment of activities across the agency
- A formal tool to track the progress/status of new ideas
- Storage of new ideas/initiatives onto a NAVEX site

How it Works:

When a Lead (staff person presenting new idea) would like to present an idea that will enhance how clients are served or make improvements to current processes, they are encouraged to fill out the attached GVRA New Idea Worksheet with as much detail as possible. This Worksheet will remain anonymous to everyone except Strategy and Innovation staff. This worksheet will also be stored on the GVRA

NAVEX site.

An ad hoc panel of three individuals, including a peer panel member, will be formed to determine if the idea improves or enhances customer service, productivity, or staff morale. The Lead will email the completed worksheet to InnovationExchangeSI@gvs.ga.gov.

Once submitted, an email confirming receipt of the idea will be sent from an OSI staff person. Throughout the process, automated alerts will be sent denoting progress.

All ideas will be considered. The OSI staff will have up to 45 days to read, review and research your request.

The Lead will receive an email from an OSI member indicating status of the idea. The OSI will track all idea submissions on a monthly basis.

Your comments are both noticed and appreciated. I am eager to hear about the creativity and innovation you all have to contribute.

Sean T. Casey



Executive Director





On May 10, GVRA Employment Services held its quarterly statewide meeting at Roosevelt Warm Springs. GVRA Executive Director Sean T. Casey was in attendance as was the Federal Aviation Administration's Office of Civil Rights, a longtime GVRA employment partner.



Onward and Upward

From Fans to Rapid Transit to Grad School

By Kimberly and John Starbuck

Zachary Starbuck, or Zack as his friends call him, is achieving his goals in life through a combination of hard work, self-knowledge and self-advocacy. He started on this path by being clear about what he wanted and what it would take for him to get what he wanted and needed. He is a model for any child who is on the verge of making life decisions for her or himself.

Zachary's mom Kimberly, a Parent Partner for Parent 2 Parent of Georgia, knew shortly after he was born that Zack had special needs. She had him evaluated at the age of 2-1/2, at which time the experts first gave him the diagnosis of being speech delayed. She enrolled him in the Small Voices Program in Berkeley, California, a small intensive speech therapy program. At age four, he was diagnosed with Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified. When Zachary was six, he received a diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome.

Zachary's dad John had his own way of meeting Zack's special needs. He would spend hours a day walking with Zachary through the business district of Petaluma, where they first lived, and then Oakland and Berkeley, searching for things of interest to the young boy. At first it was fans.... Zack loved to turn them on and off and to feel the breeze on his face. John let Zack choose which fans and for how long they would run. Once it was too much for one of the local hardware stores, which kicked them out for creating a "wind tunnel!" Zack was unfazed.

During one of their outings, John and Zack got on the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) rail line in Berkeley and traveled in search of

fans. It soon became clear that Zack was much more interested in municipal light rail and bus transportation than he was in fans. (He maintained his interest in fans for several years, just not as obsessively as he had done previously.) Zack and John traveled the length and breadth of the BART lines every weekend they had the chance. They would also take connector service on California Transit, or CalTrans, and all of the bus lines including San Francisco Municipal Transit or MUNI, Alameda-Contra Costa Transit or AC Transit and other lines. Zack would easily memorize the routes, how they connected and when they ran.

Even when Zack was more absorbed in fans than in rail and bus lines, he was also committing to memory the street layout for the East Bay stretching from Fremont to Richmond and beyond. He was more reliable than any GPS. His older sister Meleia, who ultimately attended an Ivy League college, had no sense of direction whatsoever, according to her family, so she would put her little brother in the back of the car and ask him to give her turn-by-turn directions to her destination. Zack was more than happy to do so, as it was his excuse for spending hours with Meleia.

It became clear that Zack was inerrant when it came to directions. Then one day, he was asked for directions to a street his parents had never heard of, Juanita Way in Berkeley. He said he did not know. But then Kimberly asked him, "How do you spell 'Juanita Way'?" He said, "W-A-N-E-T-A W-A-Y." When it was explained it was a Spanish word and he was told how to spell it, he instantly knew the correct directions.

Zachary's success has been built upon this



model of encouraging him to set his own goals and aspirations and then putting into place the supports that would help him achieve what he wanted. When it came time for him to first create a Transition Plan, including an ultimate goal for a profession, he sat down with his Case Manager, and not his parents, to think and talk it out. At that first Transition IEP while he was in the 6th grade, he chose as his career goal becoming an urban planner specializing in transportation issues.

Not every child is going to be so clear as to such ultimate goals. In subsequent Transition Plans, Zack added potential careers such as that of criminologist, a computer technician and a U.S. Senator, to name a few. But by encouraging Zack to follow through on his self-set goals, it made the creation of his array of supports and accommodations easier to accomplish and potential obstacles that much easier to identify. Zack's challenges with speech, writing and math problems all were things that an urban planner would have to overcome in order to become successful in that line of work.

Zachary applied to 12 colleges and universities and was accepted by 11. He chose based in part on the supports that he would get from Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency and ended up at Georgia Institute of Technology. His parents sent copies of his admission letters to the psychologist who had stated that Zack, who was four years old at the time, would not graduate with a regular diploma from high school, would never attend college and would be lucky to get and keep a job bagging groceries. Zack and his parents learned early on to seek out the help and counsel of only those who will support Zack in achieving his goals. Georgia Tech has proven itself superior in providing disability supports for Aspergers students, including help with note-taking, group meetings and other services. GVRA has proven to be instrumental to

Zachary's post-secondary educational success. GVRA has provided funding for tutors in the area of writing, math/science and socialization. It also has funded the services of a Personal Social Adjustment (PSA) trainer who has shadowed Zack through most of his classes and has provided critical and timely advice as to proper and functional behavior during most of the academic day. Zack and his parents secured the services of the PSA trainer, who had been Zachary's paraprofessional aide beginning in the 5th grade. GVRA also has funded the services of an Occupational Therapist, who has given him invaluable training and advice for fitness and sensory processing needs. Finally, GVRA's team approach and meetings have given shape and definition to Zachary's overall program.

Zachary is returning to Georgia Tech this fall to enroll in its Masters in City and Regional Planning program, with the support of GVRA and the ADAPTS Disability supports that he will continue to get from the University.

And it all began with a two year old sitting on his Dad's shoulders turning on fans to his heart's content.



Growth is Key

Helping One Client Transition

By CRC Jennifer Gilreath

Transition is that time in life when you have to step out of your comfort zone and move in directions that are very different from what or where you are comfortable. Every person goes through transitions, and every person experiences the growing pains of transition in different ways. For GVRA Client Emily Toland, leaving the comfort of the school classroom was an anxiety-filled notion. She had been provided all the tools, support and guidance, yet she remained anxious about the unknown aspects of her future. Despite her anxiety, she took the next step with a leap of faith in her support system and services and grew confident, strong and successfully employed.

Ms. Toland became employed at a local retail store with support from a job coach and has quickly managed to become stable in her position. She has learned to advocate for herself. She keeps up to date with her own work schedule and has also learned to navigate the local transit so that she can have independent transportation to her job.

She is now working approximately 20 hours a week and is exceeding the required standards of her job description, which earned her the store's first ever Employee of the Month Award.

When asked what was most helpful and what she gained throughout the process she replied, "My job coach was very helpful in finding the right job and getting me to where I am now" and "I gained a big milestone in my life I'm earning my own money and can do new things."

I'm reminded of the following quote: *"In every change, in every falling leaf there is some pain, some beauty. And that's the way new leaves grow."*

— Amit Ray

And grow is exactly what, Ms. Toland has done throughout the life of her vocational rehabilitation case and will no doubt continue to grow in to the future.

Start Your GVRA Referral Today.

Call the GIB Referral Hotline.

1.888.226.3444



A Special Graduation

High School High Tech Recognizes Graduates

By Communications Specialist Tom Connelly

On the morning of May 4 at the Albany ARC office on Stuart Avenue, a very special event occurred – the graduation of eight Dougherty County High School High Tech students. HSHT is a comprehensive community-based program that provides young students with disabilities a link to academic and career development experiences which enable them to meet contemporary workforce demands.

With a guest speaker sharing her experiences of coming of age with a disability label to completing law school and working in Washington, D.C., the students were inspired to strive for greatness no matter their challenges.

Commencing at 9 a.m., the audience was welcomed by Brandon Lateef, a HS/HT senior. Then, after the Pledge of Allegiance and some remarks by Executive Director of Albany ARC Sonny Slate, Marcus Humphrey spoke. This young man, a local HS/HT graduate who now works as director of reservations at The Partridge Inn in Augusta, is the son of a local doctor.

Mr. Humphrey noted that he was an unmotivated student while in school, viewing himself as a class clown. However, after he became involved with HS/HT, he became more focused and goal oriented. It is in this latter capacity that he now works for Hilton Hotels in his present position.

The guest speaker was Leisa Johnson. She is an attorney based in Albany.

Ms. Johnson spoke about growing up in a working-class family, one that was dysfunctional. A person who stuttered who was not able to read until she was 10, her

family used a slur to describe her. In addition, she witnessed her alcoholic father mistreating her mother.

It was not until she was moved from Maryland to Albany to live with her grandmother that she encountered people who believed in her, as well as mentored and challenged her to excel academically.

It was because of her time in Albany that Ms. Johnson developed her drive and confidence in herself. Then, after moving back to Maryland, this young lady was able to graduate as valedictorian of her high school, and then excel in college. Following this, Ms. Johnson attended and graduated from law school. Ms. Johnson addressed the audience with a loving heart.

Having worked 30 years as an attorney, she said she gave God the credit for her achievements and life. She stated that we are all “favored”, and that, despite what others may think or say, we all have a purpose. During the speech, Ms. Johnson also encouraged each of the students multiple times to “believe in themselves.”

During the ceremony, Karen Royston, Statewide High School/High-Tech Director, also spoke. According to her, Georgia has the largest HS/HT program in the nation. Started and directed in 2004 by Lee Miller, HS/HT has grown very quickly.

Now, this program can be found in 145 schools in 87 school systems throughout the state. Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency is a primary program partner.

Concerning the HS/HT program, it has now expanded to include Monroe and Doherty



High Schools. As of this writing, there are 27 students currently in the Dougherty County HS/HT program, including 8 seniors, 15 juniors, and 4 sophomores in the program.

This ceremony was well attended. Dr. Diane Boges, Dougherty County School System Director of the Exceptional Student Program, was there and gave the introduction of the HS/HT students. Assistant ESP Eirector for Dougherty County Dr. Gayle U. Bentley was also in attendance.

Representing Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency were Cathy Manuel and Sondra Hudson, CRC. Ms. Manuel is the Service Area Manager of the southwest region of Georgia, and Ms. Hudson, currently the Career Pathways Specialist for

the Southwest quadrant, served as counselor for Mr. Humphrey.

Also participating in the event were Susan Harris, Marie King, and Lavonda Gervin. Ms. Harris, Albany ARC HS/HT Coordinator, spoke about the HS/HT scholarship award. Ms. King is a Dougherty County School System HS/HT instructor. Ms. Gervin, DC SS Coordinator, voiced her thoughts about participant recognition.

Calendar of Events

Make Sure to Save the Date

GVRs Board Meeting

July 11 from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.
Hilton Garden Inn
390 E Washington St.
Athens, GA 30601

NAAAP Diversity Career Fair

August 23-25
InterContinental Buckhead Atlanta
3315 Peachtree Road Northeast
Atlanta, GA 30326

Emerging Managers & Supervisors Training

June 19 through June 22
Atlanta, GA

GVRA Leadership Summit

September 17 through September 19
Savannah, GA
Location Details Coming Soon

Empowering Young Adults

Locating Employment Avenues through
Peer Support
Summer Program 2018
June 18 through July 26
1901 Montreal Road, Suite 102
Tucker, GA 30084

Children's Healthcare of Atlanta - Camp No Limb-itations

July 22 through July 27
210 S. Broad Street , Unit 5
Winder, GA 30680

NOTE: Are you interested in Training & Development opportunities?

Please contact Linda Williams directly at 404-232-1769 or submit your requests and questions to training@gvs.ga.gov.



Welcome Aboard

GVRA Has a New Marketing Manager

Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency is pleased to add Patrice Meadows to its Office of Communications and Marketing. Patrice joins us from Hannon Hill and has nearly a decade of marketing and public relations experience.

In her new role, she will work closely with the Office Director, Robin Folsom, the communications staff, and the outreach team to ensure excellent service to our programs. The need to bring a Marketing Manager to our team was identified as we have worked to ramp up efforts to reach more clients, businesses, produce better quality marketing material, serve program needs efficiently, and advertise on more platforms. Patrice is excited about meeting many of you and discussing your marketing needs.

Patrice views marketing and public relations as tools that organizations can use to help consumers identify the right services to enhance their lives. As a member of GVRA's marketing and outreach team, she hopes to help more Georgians find sustaining and fulfilling employment.

Patrice received her Bachelor's degree from the University of Georgia and a Master's from Georgia State University. Please join us in welcoming Patrice to the GVRA family and consider her your primary point of contact for the GVRA's marketing strategy.

She may be reached at Patrice.Meadows@gvs.ga.gov and is headquartered at our 200 Piedmont Offices.



A Change of Plans

From Georgia to Tokyo and Back Again

James Brightman had a plan. He was going to be a businessman, traveling the world and the living the kind of life of opportunity that's been glamorized in movies. Going into the summer after his fourth year at the University of Georgia, the Alpharetta native was five classes from receiving his undergraduate degree in international business. And though he would ultimately complete those credits and receive his degree, and though he would ultimately travel the world, spending years in Tokyo and Hawaii, the events of that summer would put him on a course that took him away from the world of business and towards a more humanitarian path.

While home from school during the summer of 1992, James was in a car accident that left him in a coma for nearly a month. When he awoke, he was in a hospital bed at North Fulton Regional Hospital, a traumatic brain injury sustained in the accident leaving him unable to speak or walk. Months of rehabilitation brought back his speech and mobility, and working with Vocational Rehabilitation and the Office of Disability Services at UGA allowed him to negotiate the steps to return to school. Yet, despite being back on campus and moving through his coursework—essentially at the same place in his life as before the accident—he knew he himself was different.

"I went back to Athens, and I wasn't thinking about how I was a different person, but I was," James said. "But in doing it, I realized that I wasn't a businessman anymore. I needed to choose a different career."

Unsure of what he should do, James took a series of personality and career placement tests, and they all said the same thing. He's gregarious. He likes helping people. What

better avenue than the rehabilitation field itself? He took this direction and completed a Master's Degree in rehabilitation counseling.

His Master's completed, James decided to continue on and move into a doctoral program in rehabilitation counseling at Florida State University. While there, an opportunity arose that would take him to the other side of the world. A medical school professor at Tokyo University was looking someone who could study gerontology, and James met all the criteria. And so he went.

In Japan, James met and married his wife, an international student from Korea, and on the day she was in the hospital giving birth to their first child, more good news would come. He was offered a job at the University of Hawaii at Mānoa. There, he was responsible for the management and maintenance of the ACE for English Language Learners: Professional Development Program and served as an instructor for an online competency course. During this time, he also completed his doctorate.

There's a common phenomenon in Hawaii—and likely in all places isolated from greater civilization—called "island fever." In so many words, this refers to the tedium of traveling the same roads and eating the same food and living under the same weather day in and day out. It's paradise, sure. But after eight years, even a paradise can feel stale, James said.

So James and his family decided to move again, this time to return closer to his roots. Armed now with a Ph.D. in education and educational administration, James stayed in academia, acting as an assistant professor



of rehabilitation counseling at Thomas University in Thomasville.

He was there for several years before another opportunity arose, the latest being another opportunity to put everything he had learned up to this point into practice. In January of this year, James took a job as a Certified rehabilitation counselor with GVRA. At GVRA, he said, he has the chance

to do what others have done for him in the past, giving them a chance to become their best selves.

"I wanted to give back," he said.

"Throughout my career, people just saw my disability. They didn't see all my skills and all my knowledge, and I want to help people who are facing similar challenges to what I faced."





Carl McRae recently retired from GVRA after 30 years of service. Carl, pictured top left, has held a variety of positions inside the organization. We thank him for everything he's done to help individuals with disabilities.



**“The best way
to find yourself
is to lose yourself
in the service of others.”
~ Ghandi**

Serving the Public

By Communications Manager John Boan

It's been said many times that the GVRA central office staff work to serve the field, ensuring they have the resources they need to help our clients succeed in the workforce.

This newsletter, then, serves the dual purpose of promoting the efforts of the field and highlighting the successes of our clients, ensuring that both sides get the recognition each deserves. Because it does take many different people doing many different things to ensure our mission as an organization is successful.

That said, we're always hoping to hear from you. If you like what you see, please tell us. If you have an idea for a newsletter article, we want to hear that too. Any and all feedback is welcome.

You can always email john.boan@gvs.ga.gov with any information you'd like included in the newsletter or any suggestions or criticisms you may have.

As I've said previously, it's your newsletter, and we want to hear from you.

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